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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Meeting the need for safe water and sanitation as a means to poverty eradication

1. At the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, Governments promised to give the highest priority in national, regional and international policies and actions to the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition based on full participation by all. To that end, it was decided to create a framework for action to place people at the centre of development and direct economies to meet human needs more effectively.

2. At the 2002 Monterrey Consensus, Governments agreed that mobilizing and increasing the effective use of financial resources and achieving the national and international economic conditions needed to fulfil internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, to eliminate poverty, improve social conditions and raise living standards and protect the environment, will be the first step to ensuring that the twenty-first century becomes the century of development for all.

3. It has been heartening to witness that the General Assembly, in its resolution 64/292, recognized that access to water and sanitation is a human right. Members of civil society applaud the efforts of the Representative from the Plurinational State of Bolivia to bring the resolution to the floor. In its most recent constitution, South Africa also includes the right to water, and several other nations have adopted legislation on the right to water. Other developing nations such as Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda are engaged in extending the provision of safe water and sanitation.

4. In Soufouroulaye, Mali, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) arranged funding to repair latrines and a non-functioning water pump at a school, which had left children at a high risk of disease. International partners, including "Dubai cares", the Government of Belgium, the Wavin water distribution group, the "Aqua for all" foundation of the Netherlands and Danone in Japan are working to make a difference in the lives of families in Mali, where some 60 per cent of schools will be given help to obtain clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, as well as health and hygiene education, in order to give children the capacity to be agents of change.

5. In Uganda, progress has been made in improving school attendance, especially for girls. The "Focusing on resources for effective school health" programme, in conjunction with UNICEF, has: (a) installed 172 water tanks, 190 latrines and 45 washrooms; (b) trained 721 teachers in skills-based health education, focusing on how to deal with girls' issues, and equipped teachers with basic counselling skills; and (c) developed a partnership with the World Food Programme to collaborate with rehabilitating schools.

6. The United Nations *2010 Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water*, published by the World Health Organization, found that total foreign assistance for water fell between 1997-2008. It also reported that developing nations attach insufficient priority to water and sanitation in their national poverty reduction plans. Additionally, Transparency International cites corruption in the

water sector as a root cause and catalyst for the global water crisis that threatens billions of lives and exacerbates environmental degradation.

7. People who lack access to safe water and sanitation remain excluded from the most elementary opportunities for social integration. The World Health Organization estimates that 884 million people, or one person in eight, live without safe drinking water, a number that is predicted to increase with the effects of climate change. Another 2.5 billion are without sanitation, despite the fact that safe drinking water and hand washing with soap could prevent 85 to 90 per cent of diarrhoeal diseases. It also remains the case that 4,000 children die every day from water-related diseases.

8. The development of water and sanitation systems in rural and urban areas would: (a) alleviate poverty; (b) contribute to overall food security; (c) ensure general health and help to eradicate diarrhoeal diseases; (d) allow the girl child to attend school and women to take on a productive role in education, work and community involvement regarding the protection and management of water and sanitation systems; and (e) help to achieve environmental and economic sustainability.

Recommendations

9. Member States must place greater importance on the need for and benefits to the provision of access to water and sanitation.

10. People, especially those in need and who would benefit most, should be placed at the centre of development by inviting them to be equal partners in decision-making and through every step of the project.

11. Well-established, credible partners should be chosen with which to collaborate in this effort.

12. Sufficient funding should be allocated from domestic resources in order to provide sustainable country-wide water and sanitation infrastructure, management and maintenance.

13. Water and sanitation facilities should be provided in schools so that the girl child will be safer, better educated and prepared for a mature, productive role in society.

14. Clear limits should be specified on the private ownership and control of water and sanitation resources. All public/private partnerships for delivery systems must be monitored to ensure that their structures contain components that work to the favour of the poor.

Note: Statement also endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Carmelite NGO, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, Franciscans International, International Association of Schools of Social Work, Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries.